



Standard 3 Visit

Name of Service	Linden Lodge School
Date of previous visit	09/05/2023 (pre visit also on 25/04/23)
Date of this visit	27/06/2023
Standard 3 Visitor	Mark Goode
Time of visit	13.30
Visit Supported by	Danny Sinclair – Head of Residential Sarah Norris – Co-Head of School for Residential

About the Independent Visitor

Visiting the residential provision today is Mark Goode. Mark has worked in the Education sector for the past 24 years, leading in multiple schools and alternative providers with experience as both Headteacher and Executive Headteacher. Mark spent time as one of Her Majesty's Inspectors with OFSTED. Mark is experienced in leading bespoke education covering ages 4 to 19 across the full academic range for pupils with wide-ranging complex additional, special and health needs. Mark's strong track-record of inspection processes has helped organisations with low ratings, as well as both 'Good' and 'Outstanding' ratings. Mark undertakes visits on behalf of Platinum Care Consultancy in a number of residential School settings. These include settings designated for care and education of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, learning difficulties, sensory impairment, physical disabilities and health conditions.

Standard 3 Visits

INTRODUCTION: Standard 3 - Monitoring by Independent Visitors (as of 5th September 2022).

3.1 The Governing Body, trustees, or proprietor of the school appoint a representative who is independent of the leadership and management of the school to visit the residential provision six times, spread evenly, over the course of a school year and complete a written report on the conduct of the school. The representative is vetted in line with the school's safe recruitment policy, in accordance with the safer recruitment requirements set out in Keeping children safe in education, and has the skills and authority to effectively carry out this role

3.2 Monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include:

- **conversations with children, the senior management team and staff;**
- **conversations with social workers where relevant;**
- **conversations with parents/carers where relevant;**
- **checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, bullying, restraint (including restrictive interventions), risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children including in relation to residential provision;**
- **evaluation of the quality of the provision and effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded;**
- **Assessment of the suitability and physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the residential provision and the external environment.**

3.3 Written reports of all monitoring visits are provided to the Headteacher (or school equivalent) and where applicable the Governing Body, trust, or proprietor.

- **Reports are also provided to each member of that body (or the appropriate committee of that body) within two weeks and as written by the visitor without amendment or summary. The Governing Body, trustees, or proprietor of the school should record a formal response to each written report.**
- **Monitoring reports and formal responses should be retained by the school and made available during an inspection and, on request, shared with any placing authorities and with the local authority where the school is located.**

3.4 The Headteacher (or school equivalent), Governing Body, trustees, or proprietor carry out, and record in writing, once each year: a review of the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision for residential pupils, in relation to:

- **its Statement of Purpose;**
- **its staffing policy;**
- **the placement plans for individual children; and**
- **an internal assessment of its compliance with these standards and**
- **actions it will undertake to ensure compliance.**

There is also an intention to review other thematic areas in discussion with the school:

- **The evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded.**
- **An assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture, and equipment of the School.**

During visits opportunities are also taken to:

- **Provide opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet me (in private if they wish).**
- **Carry out observations of the care provided, or systems being used.**

Introduction and Context for this visit

Linden Lodge is a day and residential Special Needs School for pupils with Vision and Sensory Impairment. It occupies a 3-acre campus close to the centre of London and has a range of specialist departments. The school roll has not changed significantly since my last visit.

As I arrived for this Standard 3 visit the Head of Residential was engaged in a safeguarding meeting, and as a result the initial context update was undertaken by the Co-Head designated to Residential. We then arranged a consultation with the Head of Therapy and undertook a context update until the Head of Residential joined me to complete Standard 3 mandatory areas and other components of the visit.

In terms of the context of the residential setup I was informed that a resident that had been permitted to stay past her age based end date in order to complete her exams has now left. As mentioned in a previous report, the school had organised a detailed risk assessment and contacted parents of other boarders. This was a successful period for the boarder and good practice by the school. This boarder, along with another, has now moved on to another provider that is a regular destination for Linden Lodge pupils. This provision was explained as being a destination that undertakes strong handover for pupils and there is a good reciprocal working relationship. I suggested undertaking a consultation with this provision. This is detailed in the consultation section.

The Co-Head explained that recently arrived staff had settled well and that the residential provision having a dedicated workforce (compared to using school and agency staff) has been a positive development. In this regard the Co-Head explained that a recent charity event that was attended by a group of pupils and established staff had meant that the Head of Residential was overseeing residential with predominantly new staff. I had previously planned a consultation with newly arrived staff in the last visit, and the details of this are contained in the consultation section lower in this report. Once the Head of Residential joined me we undertook a consultation, covered the mandatory areas of the Standard 3 process and also arranged a consultation with a parent. In general terms I was impressed in this visit with the positive energy from staff and the happy atmosphere in residential.

Areas requiring action from previous visit

Action Point from Previous Visit	Provider's Response and Verification by Independent Visitor
<p><u>Leadership and Management</u> For the Head of Residential to update the IV in term 6 as to the status of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Residential Improvement Plan (after the MAT leaders' feedback) - The use of Admin Support to help with review of Care Plans and Risk Assessments. - Developments in the use of a case study approach to impact for boarders and staff. 	<p><u>Response</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Residential will provide updated information regarding Residential improvement plan. • Timetable of risk assessment and care plan review. • Case study of impact on Residential young people and staff. <p><u>Verification</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Residential Improvement plan has gone to Governors for approval and contains aspects related to the fabric of the building (developments in wet room and other elements). The Head of Residential explained that the SCCIF is set to be looked at in September. • The Head of Residential explained that the timetable referred to above is due to begin in July and is to integrate the therapy team, school and residential team into one process. • The Head of Residential and I discussed this, and connected it to the consultation with the Head of Therapy. I suggested consideration of how to present these in a way that supports transparency for both residential and the therapy team, a decision of how to achieve this, and it may serve to consider whether this is based around individual boarders or a therapy centred approach.

<p>Human Resources</p> <p>For the Head of Residential to prompt new staff as to the fact that the IV will seek to discuss recruitment and induction processes in term 6. This will add to the thematic area undertaken this time.</p>	<p><u>Response</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New staff will be informed the independent visitor will meet with them and discuss interview and recruitment. • Staff will attend training regularly regarding safeguarding. • Safeguarding is discussed and recorded in supervision, staff will explore further the impact of safeguarding. <p><u>Verification</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please see the consultation section for details of the time spent with the newer staff.
<p>SCCIF Audit</p> <p>To use the supplied blank template to begin an audit of the SCCIF as a means to furthering the development of the residential provision.</p>	<p><u>Response</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCCIF. On the next visit from the independent visitors they will be shown the development of the residential provision. <p><u>Verification</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The developments related to the residential improvement plan were discussed, and the SCCIF is set to be used in the planning work to develop the boarding setup into 2023-24. I will follow this up in term 1 of next year.

How well Children and Young People are Safeguarded.

In discussing the oversight of safeguarding with the Head of Residential a sequence of events was explained in which a resident collapsed whilst playing. This resident has a history of medical issues, and the events explained contained the calling of an ambulance, following the emergency plan that is in place. The school defibrillator was ready to be used.

The boarder was taken to hospital with chest pains and has remained there since for a few weeks. The main thrust of this discussion was related to the rationale for the boarder not being discharged to the home environment owing to some safeguarding concerns. There is regular contact between residential and the home environment. Safeguarding support has been in place through regular contact with the boarder's social worker. The next stage is set to be a TAF meeting and an assessment of what is needed next, what the boarder is capable of doing prior to returning home, and being considered for return into boarding in September. I will follow this up in the first term of the next academic year.

As an aside, as we were discussing this sequence of events, a radio message came through that alerted the Head of Residential to a potential issue with travel, and before he had the chance to react it was already responded to by the Deputy, and this saw me reflect upon the high level of vigilance present in the staff mindset.

As a result of this visit I remain of the opinion that safeguarding practices are strong at Linden Lodge and I have no concerns.

Mandatory Areas

Topic	Comments
Records of attendance/ exclusion/ missing episodes 20.9	<p>The Head of Residential explained that there have again been no missing episodes and no exclusions since the last Standard 3 visit.</p> <p>Attendance figures for this year to date for boarding students is running at 92.4% and the figure for day pupils is 86.8%. These attendance figures remain slightly more positive for boarders, indicating that boarding helps to increase attendance. The figures for boarding attendance have also increased since the last visit, again this is clearly a healthy sign.</p>
Complaints 19.1, 19.2, 19.3	<p>The Head of Residential informed me that there had been a concern raised related to processes for a boarder using the washing machine that parents were not anticipating, but that this had been resolved through communication quickly.</p> <p>Other than this there have been no complaints raised. Communication is strong with families in general and complaints are rare.</p>
Sanctions 20.6	<p>The Head of Residential informed me that there have once again been no sanctions applied since my last visit in term 5. The interactions I experienced with boarders in my visit were very positive and was best characterised by being responsive to their needs and wishes. Sanctions are extremely rare in my experience of visits to Linden Lodge.</p>
Restraint (including restrictive interventions) 20.3, 20.4, 20.5, 20.6, 20.7	<p>The Head of Residential explained that there have been again no occasions when restrictive interventions have been used since my last visit in term 5. All that I saw in this visit reassured me that the circumstances when a restrictive intervention may occur remain extremely unlikely owing to the responsive management of boarders by staff based on their needs.</p>
Risk Assessments Appendix B (11,16)	<p>The Head of Residential and I discussed the approach taken in terms of the newly planned calendar for care plan and risk assessment reviews. This is set to involve a wider range of staff from different departments and will add depth to it as a result.</p>
Placement Plans 7.2	<p>The Head of Residential also explained that the presence of the admin support staff member in residential has been a pivotal appointment that is helping to add to this level of work.</p> <p>The plans remain high quality and are reviewed at least termly in line with the NMS expectations.</p>
Suitability of the building, furnishings & external environment.	
<p>As described in the section related to recommendations from the last visit, there is work ongoing related to the fabric of the building that will take a little while and will inevitably see some work take place in the summer break.</p> <p>In addition, I toured the residential provision during this visit, and it was explained that the outdoor terrace was set to have lights added to enable use in the evenings in the summer period.</p> <p>The buildings remain a homely place to board and the staff are focussed on ensuring they are maintained effectively.</p>	

Consultations Supporting this Visit.

Under Standard 3 this is stated as meaning that conversations with children, senior management team, staff and parents/carers and social workers, where relevant.

Consultation with Head of Residential

During this visit the Head of Residential and I discussed recent developments and undertook a tour of residential, in which I observed boarders during the preparation for their evening activities. Boarders were preparing for swimming, a trip to the shops and enjoying activities within the boarding houses. They were pleased to see me and greeted me warmly. The interactions with staff were as warm as ever in my visits, with one staff member explaining how the evening activities contained opportunities to cook items of the boarders' choice – this particular evening the choice being biscuits.

We reflected upon the developments during this academic year, and how the recent (and ongoing) staffing developments have brought about a much more settled feel to residential at Linden Lodge.

We also discussed a range of other ways that boarders may be supported in terms of developing their skills and life chances. I shared other resources that could be of use and suggested the Wheel of Independence (an online resource that I have used in other areas of my work), and how it can be used to interact with ASDAN Life Skills challenges potentially. The Head of Residential seemed keen to look into these further and I would be delighted if they were considered worthy of consideration.

Further to this we discussed the next steps in developments in residential, including the update that is taking place of the Residential Improvement plan, and how the SCCIF can be a feature possibly.

Parent Consultation, targeted at an established boarder.

Following this Standard 3 visit I made contact with the father of a boarder who explained that the main purpose of the residential experience was to develop their son's independence skills and encourage development, as well as such elements as cookery and what to do in an emergency.

The parent explained that the residential experience meets their son's needs very well as he has developed cookery skills, greater levels of independence and then shared a story of a meal that their son prepared in the residential house that they, as parents, attended and enjoyed very much.

The parent was happy to confirm that staff were easy to reach and extremely supportive. When asked if there were any concerns it was very clearly stated that they have none at all.

Consultation with the Therapy Lead

At the start of this visit I spent time discussing therapy support with the Therapy Lead, and she explained many aspects of the work that is undertaken at Linden Lodge. This contained an overview of the fact that she leads a team of 24 therapists that are employed directly by the school, rather than through the NHS, and encompasses Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy and Speech and Language Therapy.

It is clear that the Therapy Lead feels that Linden Lodge is a special place to work, and considers that the school is in an extremely fortunate position. There are many positive effects of this and predominantly enables the school to support pupils in a wide variety of ways that goes past the minimum requirements as detailed in each EHCP.

This is seen in the way that the EHCP is the baseline and therefore the start point, but that by employing therapists directly, the work is able to take place themed across all areas of the work of the school, including

the school day, residential time and even trips out and residential camps (as happened recently). It was further explained that multi-disciplinary work is easier to achieve and happens all the time. The Therapy Lead then gave details of 3 boarders and showcased the way in which therapy is designed in a bespoke fashion to help drive holistic development. It was very clear from the details that families are fully supported and the overriding aim is to support developments that are transferable between the school and home setting.

We also discussed how impact is tracked and made visible in such a way as to showcase the high quality work that is undertaken. The Therapy Lead explained that young people all have a baseline assessment, individual therapy programmes, and reviews that are bespoke to each young person, and focusses upon how gaps are bridged, and utilise key performance indicators before reassessment and fresh therapy thereafter. The Therapy Lead explained that there is a goal attainment scale and goal setting in place.

It was suggested that a case study approach may be of use to demonstrate impact on individual boarders, and I further suggested that a collaborative approach alongside the Head of Residential to create this would be worth considering.

Consultation with 2 recently appointed staff team members

As agreed at the last Standard 3 visit, I spoke at length to 2 recently appointed staff members regarding their recruitment, induction and the start of their employment at Linden Lodge.

Both explained their motivation for working in the residential provision, and it was clear to me that they both have high levels of motivation to support the boarders for the right reasons.

They explained that the interview process explored their reasons and probed their experiences and understanding of safeguarding processes fully. This included exploring what actions they would take if they had concerns, and both were able to clearly explain safeguarding expectations at Linden Lodge.

Related to the programme of induction that they are both engaged in, they explained that they have been required to gain a full understanding of the needs of all boarders before starting their work in the houses, and are both enrolled on appropriate courses as expected by the NMS.

Supervision was made clear to be taking place, and both staff stated how well supported they feel in their new role. Overall, the staff explained processes that meet the requirements of the NMS well, and this was a pleasing thing to be told that subsequently supports the provision to offer high quality care.

Consultation with staff member of 'In Focus', a provider that boarders have moved on to from Linden Lodge

A few days following the Standard 3 visit I spoke to the Head of Visual Impairment Specialist Services at 'In Focus', a post 16 provision in Exeter. He explained that there has been a long-standing working relationship with Linden Lodge that dates back around 10 years. This sees them take on approximately 2 pupils per year as they transition out of their time at Linden Lodge, and take up places with 'In Focus'.

He explained that upon his initial visit around a decade ago he was struck by the similarities in the style and purpose of the provision, and the relationship has grown from there. He commented that whilst staff have moved on, the connection has strengthened over time.

He explained that 'In Focus' have attended transition events and fayres at Linden Lodge where they have had a stall, and that these have been accompanied by lots of direct contact from families through word of mouth between parents as well.

The work between Linden Lodge and 'In Focus' was described as at some times appearing like a 'pincer movement' that gathers lots of relevant information prior to admission, and is then developed into a mechanism to secure funding from local authority providers in support of parents, and of course ensuring continuity of educational and residential provision wherever possible. There are sometimes issues in this as in all commissioning processes, but the connections between Linden Lodge and 'In Focus' clearly supports all with the young people being placed at the centre of these decisions.

The process of transition was described in detail and the handover of information from Linden Lodge was described as extremely fulsome, and that it leads to a period of pre-assessment (pre-visit often by parents, 2 day assessment visit for young people etc).

Assuming the cases are relatively simple then placements can be agreed at this point, but the complexity of cases can see further discussion required, and this is where the greatest strength of the interrelationship between Linden Lodge and 'In Focus' was most evident. The description of several cases that had led to greater liaison with LA funders, and almost to tribunals, laid bare the fact that the communication and information sharing between the two organisations has been pivotal to ensuring continuity of provision.

He described the collaboration as covering aspects as detailed below:

- Therapists communicating directly between organisations.
- Behaviour management handover
- Risk Assessment and Care Plan handover
- Practicalities (equipment, strategies etc)

These prolonged and extended contacts have helped with developing truly wraparound transition processes for the benefit of all concerned, most notably the families and residents.

Finally, it was explained that after an initial period at 'In Focus' of no longer than a half term there is a placement review that is evaluated to ensure lessons are learned, and the examples that were quoted from Linden Lodge have been described as extremely pleasing, largely as a result of the collaborations described above.

There are two such processes underway at present ahead of September start dates, and the process is being used in one case to support a complex scenario as described.

In summary, this call exemplified the high quality communication and handover work that I have witnessed upon admissions into Linden Lodge in previous Standard 20 and Standard 3 Visits, and demonstrated the fact that this is followed through by Linden Lodge staff at the tail end of their support for students as well.

Thematic Areas	
Standard/SCCIF Reference	Evidence / Observation
	None undertaken at this visit.

Summary of Visit and Quality of Provision

This was a very pleasing visit and a fine way to draw a very positive year to a close in terms of Standard 3 visits to Linden Lodge. There is no doubt that Sarah, Danny, Vicky and the staff team have settled well after a year in which there has been a lot of change. Crucially, parents and boarders remain very happy at Linden Lodge, and care is of a high standard.

I would like to thank everyone at Linden Lodge for their continued welcome into the school each time that I visit. I truly feel a part of the team that is supporting improvement and I wish all staff and boarders (and families) well for the Summer Break. I look forward to coming back in the new academic year and continuing the support through helping the team target their work as effectively as possible.

Name: Mark Goode

Date: 30/06/2023

RECOMMENDATIONS AND/OR RESPONSE FOR THIS VISIT

Actions	Comments from Provider	Expected Completion Date
<p><u>Residential Improvement Planning & the SCCIF</u> To further develop the recently updated Improvement plan and consider incorporating an audit of the SCCIF into this process.</p> <p><u>SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria): The Effectiveness of Leaders and Managers</u> Leaders and managers know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period.</p>	<p>SCCIF will demonstrate, residential Improvements. Audit will be undertaken against the SCCIF</p> <p>Staff and young people surveys, will show progress, and improvements.</p>	Term 1 2023-24
<p><u>Case Study Development</u> To consider how best to showcase the strong work that goes on within both residential and therapy teams – please see higher up in this report for discussion around this with both the Head of Residential and the Therapy Lead.</p> <p><u>SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria): The overall experiences and progress of children</u> The experience of staying at the school enhances children’s life opportunities. For children with the most complex needs, staff are able to evidence the sustained benefit they have had in making a difference to the lives of children in their care.</p>	<p>Case study will showcase, the way in which therapy is designed in a bespoke holistic way.</p> <p>National Minimum Standards and SCCIF, will show the young people’s experiences and life opportunities. September 2023</p>	Term 1 2023-24

Head of Residential’s Comments

Nice report to read, Mark managed to capture so much information and good practice. Whilst also showing how residential is constantly evolving and adapting to meeting young people’s needs.

Name: Danny Sinclair

Date: 5th July 2023

Head Teachers' Comments

At Linden Lodge we foster the ethos of collaborative working across the whole of the provision and our interdisciplinary work at Richley House (residential) to support children and young people with vision impairment and multisensory impairment is evidenced throughout Mark's report which is a pleasure to read.

Name: Sarah Norris

Date: 07.07.2023

Formal Response from the Governing Body, trustees, or proprietor of the school

This is another very positive report. It includes good quality triangulated evidence of high quality practice by an effective leadership team and a committed staff group. The benefits for children at Richley House are clear.

It is important that children at Richley House recognise the Independent Visitor and they understand the purpose of his visits.

It is especially helpful to read the evidence of effective safeguarding practice and to read evidence supported by pupils and parents. The Governing Board take a view that a therapy provision that is closely integrated with other services in Linden Lodge is of great benefit to students and families. The Independent Visitor reinforces that view.

The ongoing review of the action plan will assist Governors to ensure an effective oversight of the service to children at Linden Lodge. We commend the leadership team and staff at Richley House for another very positive report

Name: Kieran Travers & Rupert Marks

Date: 10/07/2023